



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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HEALTH NOTES.

BY H. LAING GORDON, M.D.

THE TEACHING OF HOUSEWIFERY.

IN the December "Notes" reference was made to this important subject, and I revert to it in order to draw attention to an institution which has existed for six years with no other object than the teaching of Housewifery. At the same time I would say that there are one or two other schools on much the same lines, and that this one is selected because of its proximity to London and because particulars of it are before me.

Southdown House, Lewes, is a residential school for household and domestic training, under the auspices of the East Sussex County Council, and under the direction of the Ladies' Committee for the Technical Instruction of Women and Girls in East Sussex. There are some twenty ladies representative of various districts upon this committee, and a few gentlemen have the good fortune to be admitted as members of the County Council.

The instruction given in Southdown House is said to be thoroughly practical. There is training in Cookery, Laundry work, Dress-cutting, and General Housewifery. The term is three months, but may with advantage be extended to six months. The fees are astonishingly moderate. The situation of the school and the general arrangements would appear to be all that is desirable. Certificates of proficiency are issued to competent students after a residence of not less than three months. After reading the prospectus of this institution, the mere man will be inclined to think that the possessor of a Southdown House Certificate must be "a treasure indeed."

The "students" of the school are drawn from two classes. First from the daughters of small farmers and tradesmen, labourers, &c.—that is, from the class which in the country

supplies domestic servants. These girls all reside in the school and receive not only the routine practical instruction, but take the ordinary work of the household in turns weekly, thus two act as housemaids, two as pantrymaids, one in the kitchen, and so on. Twice a week each girl cooks her own dinner. The practical instruction in housewifery includes the best methods of maintaining cleanliness, the care and repair of household linen, cleaning of glass, silver, &c., &c., and store-room management and catering, and other details too numerous to mention here. In a word, all the instruction is given which a former generation had carefully imparted to it by its mothers, and which the present generation has neglected for higher things, under a mistaken impression that the knowledge of housewifery comes by instinct, and even then is of no great importance.

Ladies who desire a proper knowledge of housekeeping for their own purposes form the second class of "student." It is possible that the possession of a Housewifery Certificate may come to be regarded as equal in importance to the possession of an Oxford Local, or a College of Music Certificate, for the average girl. The ardent youth scarcely considers such a question, but as paterfamilias he may some day in retrospective rage condemn his mother-in-law for her parental neglect in forgetting to provide her daughter with this kind of knowledge.

The "lady-students" of Southdown House receive the same kind of practical instruction as the ordinary pupils. There is a gratifying absence of the word "lecture" in the school prospectus, and it would appear there is no trifling with "science." At the same time, an exception must be made for "Home-nursing," on which subject lectures are properly given.

The school is presumably able to point to good results in justification of its existence. That there is a growing demand for schools, run on the lines laid down in the prospectus of Southdown House, there can be no doubt. There is nothing

to indicate whether attention is paid to the formation of the character of the girls, who are thus trained for domestic service—whether the discipline is such as to make the girl valuable, not only for the instruction she has received, but also for the manner in which she fulfils her duties. It is to be hoped this important point is not overlooked.

The health of the household depends in no small measure upon the manner in which the house is kept; dirty larders, ill-kept day and night nurseries and suchlike are responsible for more illness than "chills" on any of our innocent organs. We depend upon our domestic servants to keep our houses well, and we desire them above all to look on dirt of all kinds with abhorrence. Without offending the prejudices of anyone, it may be safely said that there is a need for more discipline amongst domestic servants as a class; the military spirit is abroad in the country and we are learning as a people the value of discipline.

There are those who maintain that modern elementary education has ruined girls for domestic service; and such people desire the abolition of any education other than the three R's for girls of the lower classes. It is just as rational to maintain that because some people distort their feet by wearing ill-fitting boots, we ought all to be condemned to the hideous monstrosities known as natureform or anatomical boots. Ordinary boots properly made and fitted may yet be serviceable, free from foot-distorting effects and pretty withal, as everyone likes to see them. Similarly, ordinary girls may by ordinary education, including technical, domestic training, be properly fitted for their responsibilities as domestic servants without any revolution.

OUR WORK.

Conference.—The Annual Conference will be held on May 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th, at St. Martin's Town Hall, Charing Cross. Full particulars as to further arrangements will be announced in due course. Local Secretaries are requested to note these dates.

HOUSE OF EDUCATION CLASS LIST.

			Paper I.	Paper II.	Paper III.	Teaching.	TOTAL.
A. M. NEILD	...	...	110	73	89	100	372
B. S. WINGATE	...	...	67	55	103	95	320
L. C. FAUNCE	...	...	75	93	96	95	359
L. M. CONDER	...	...	98	58	63	90	309
M. EVANS	...	...	105	72	95	90	362
M. STRACHAN	...	...	41	33	45	85	204
D. TETLEY	...	...	58	44	65	85	252
E. SPEARMAN	...	...	50	45	45	80	220
M. D. RYAN	...	...	93	84	108	90	375
O. A. CLARK	...	...	55	34	27	50	166
D. NESBITT	...	...	100	96	101	120	417
M. L. MACKENZIE	...	...	108	98	73	90	369

Full marks for each of above, 120.

First Class:—D. Nesbitt, M. D. Ryan, A. M. Neild, M. L. Mackenzie, M. Evans, L. C. Faunce.

Second Class:—B. S. Wingate, L. M. Conder. (Miss Hughes, last summer, ¹ 88, ² 68, ³ 72, ⁴ 90: Total 318.)

Third Class:—D. Tetley, E. Spearman, M. Strachan.

Fourth Class:—O. A. Clark.

From Report: "I heard the 12 senior students give lessons, most of these lessons were good, and one by Miss Nesbitt on teaching Algebra through Geometry was of especial merit. The written answers to questions on the Principles and History of Education maintained a good average of merit. I should like to see rather more acquaintance with the writings of educational classics at first hand and rather less criticism borrowed from others. An analysis of the lessons given or prepared by the students shows that the ground of instruction is well covered. The language lessons included Latin, French, and German. Mathematical instruction included lessons in Euclid and Algebra, besides Arithmetic. In English Literature readings were taken from Plutarch's *Lives* and Browning. Lessons were also given in English History and Geography and in Natural History. The Nature Note-books, which have long been a special feature in the House of Education, continue to be carefully kept and render the instruction in Natural History specially good. Various drills are practised and the excellent work of the drill-sergeant deserves special mention, &c."

Dec. 21st, 1899.

(Signed) T. G. ROOPER.